Finally, a federal hate crimes bill that will protec

OPINION

BRUCE H. DEBOSKEY
GUEST COLUMNIST

It has been 11 years since Matthew Shepard was beaten, tied to a lonely Wyoming fence, and left to die because his attackers hated gay men. That same year, James Byrd, Jr., was dragged to his death behind a pickup truck in Jasper, Texas, a victim of a racially motivated crime. One of Byrd's attackers wore tattoos including the image of a black man hanging from a tree.

Shepard and Byrd were not the only victims of those horrible crimes. In both cases, the murderers were not simply committing a crime against Shepard or Byrd; they were sending a chilling message to everyone who shared the characteristics of the victims — to every American who is gay or black. "You, and anyone like you, are not welcome here," the perpetrators said through their hateful violence. "You, and anyone like you, are not safe here." In fact, they were sending that message to all Americans.

The most recent FBI statistics show that there were 7,624 hate crimes in 2007. That's almost one hate crime for every hour of every day. Most of those crimes were based on race, and many victims were targeted because of their religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Crimes against Latinos are on the rise, fueled in part by demonizing rhetoric about undocumented immigrants.

It took a long time, but now — finally — the United States Congress has sent a resounding message of support to victimized groups, a serious warning to those who would be perpetrators and a statement of safety and security to all who live in this country. Last week, Congress passed the "Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act," and sent it to President Barack Obama, who has indicated that he will sign it into law.

All violent crimes shatter the peace, and all victims deserve justice. But, just as crimes against police officers have a widespread impact beyond individual incidents and receive separate treatment under the law, hate crimes also have a broad effect on the fabric of our society.

In its findings for the new law, Congress specifically mentioned that bias-motivated crime devastates not only the individual victim but "savages the community sharing the traits that caused the victim to be selected."

Hate crime laws protect us all from bias-motivated violence. Whether any one of us is black or white, Latino or Middle-Eastern, Jewish or Christian, gay or straight — if we are targeted because of our race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability, this law covers us.

This new law will allow local law enforcement agencies to request additional resources from the federal government when a hate crime occurs.

It also provides authority for the federal government itself to prosecute some violent crimes directed against individuals because of their sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability, authority the federal government never had before.

State hate crimes laws are a patchwork. Five states do not have any hate crimes laws. Of those that do, many do not cover sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability. If a locality cannot or will not prosecute a hate crime, federal authorities now will

'07" 9/27/09

Gay council candidate is not a 1-issue man

OPINION

BARRY NOREEN
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One of the many applicants for the District 3 City Council vacancy has lived here 17 years, so he knows the town.

He runs a nonprofit agency, so he knows how to operate on a shoestring. He graduated from Fountain-Fort Carson High School and has degrees from Colorado State University-Pueblo and Pikes Peak Community College.

At 28, this candidate can offer a perspective the council has not had.

Oh, and one more thing — Ryan Acker is the first openly gay person ever to attempt to become a member of the Colorado Springs City Council.

In his application for the job, Acker neither backed away from his sexual orientation nor played it up.

As director of the Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Community Center, Acker is well known in the community; council members certainly know who he is. His advocacy for gay rights is well-known, but he doesn't sound like someone who would be a one-issue council member.

"The city is at a time where there are some really critical things going on," Acker said. "This is going to be a tough time figuring out how to get through today

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"The city is at a time where there are some really critical things going on," Acker said. "This is going to be a tough time figuring out how to get through today and tomorrow and also the future."

In his application for the job, Acker wrote that his experience in the nonprofit sector has given him a "first-hand perspective of economic challenges within our city." He said his youth would be an asset, allowing him to "provide a perspective that relates to literally thousands of residents in our community."

Why should Acker's sexual orientation be an issue?

It shouldn't.

Why would a columnist write about it?

C'mon, let's face it: Colorado Springs has been the gay-bashing capital of Colorado. Amendment 2, which sanctioned discrimination against gays, was born here.

Mayor Lionel Rivera was first elected partly because of his promise to do away with health benefits for the same-sex partners of city employees. Whatever locals might think, around the country our town is known as the place that doesn't like gay people very much.

That's why Acker's pursuit of a council seat is notable. By the way, this isn't an endorsement — there are several qualified applicants who have already served in important volunteer and professional roles in the city.

The council will be able to appoint a qualified, committed person other than Acker. The fact that he is gay is no more a qualifier than it should be a disqualifier.

There are sure to be voices in the community who object to having a gay public official.

Those voices should be ignored.

Colorado has an openly gay congressman, Jared Polis. There also have been a few gay state legislators.

There is a state law that forbids anyone from denying a person a job based on sexual orientation.

Darn good law.

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More employers setting policies to protect LGBT workers

By Rebecca Tonn
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Some of the nation's top companies are leading the trend toward making the workplace a welcoming environment for all workers.

Forty-one percent of Fortune 500 and 25 percent of Fortune 1000 companies have policies protecting transgender employees from discrimination.

And this year, 305 businesses reached a 100 percent rating on the Corporate Equality Index 2010, compared with 260 businesses last year, according to a Human Rights Campaign Foundation report. When the index was launched during 2002, only 13 businesses reached 100 percent.

Collectively, these 305 businesses employ 9.3 million U.S. workers.

It could be argued that part of being a successful company includes having a nondiscrimination policy.

Bloem

"Of the 286 Fortune 500 businesses rated by the CEI, 123 received 100 percent ratings, with an average CEI rating of 83," said Eric Bloem, deputy director of Workplace Project for the foundation. "And 11 of the Fortune top 20 companies received 100 percent ratings."

But despite advances toward equality, evidence shows that discrimination in the workplace is alive and well in America.

The results of a nationwide survey and focus-group study of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers were released by the foundation to coincide with the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee's Sept. 23 hearing about H.R. 3017.

The legislation, known as the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, was introduced in the House June 24 and in the Senate on Aug. 5.

The HRC study shows that 51 percent of LGBT workers hide their LGBT identity at work, leading to increased workplace stress, less productivity and the inability to participate in everyday conversations — which "hinders trust and cohesion with their co-workers and superiors."

Men, younger workers, racial and ethnic minorities and workers at larger companies are less likely to be open about their LGBT identity at work.

When asked to describe a positive work climate, LGBT workers characterize it as one in which they feel free to be themselves, voice their opinions, engage openly in non-work-related conversations, feel safe from discrimination and believe they are valued, accepted and part of a team.

More than 50 studies of discrimination against LGB people have established that they face significant barriers to equality.

Fewer studies have been conducted about discrimination against transgender people.

But transgender Americans have twice the rate of unemployment as the general population.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund conducted a six-month joint-effort survey with the National Center for Transgender Equality of 6,450 transgender and gender-nonconforming people, in all 50 states, as well as Washington D.C., Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The key finding is that discrimination in employment against transgender people is "a nearly universal experience."

Ninety-seven percent of transgender people surveyed reported being "mistreated or harassed at work." And 47 percent "lost their jobs, were denied a promotion, or denied a job as a direct result of being transgender."

Employers interested in providing a work environment that is supportive of diversity have many options.

In addition to local, state or federal laws, or a lack thereof, employers can implement their own nondiscrimination policy.

Acker

"It's a great indicator of inclusion for a company to have their own policy that includes nondiscrimination for sexual orientation or gender identity or expression," said Ryan Acker, executive director of the Pikes Peak Gay & Lesbian Community Center.

Acker said that one of the first things LGBT employees look for in a company

See LGBT page 21

Non-Discrimination Policies
Sexual Orientation

	Fortune 20	Fortune 100	Fortune 500	Fortune 1000	AmLaw 200
2009 Interim	19 (95%)	97 (97%)	434 (87%)	702 (70%)	157 (79%)
2008 Total	19 (95%)	97 (97%)	423 (85%)	689 (69%)	150 (75%)
2003 Total		96 (96%)	360 (72%)	—	—

Source: Human Rights Campaign

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LGBT: New resource

From page 2

is whether it has a "comprehensive nondiscrimination" policy.

And employers also can promote diversity in the workplace through programs and focus groups in which participants can talk about what diversity means and "what inclusion looks like" in practice, not just policy.

Such programs can show that an employer is "proactive and recognizes diversity in their employees, clients and leadership as an asset," Acker said.

and religious organizations would be exempt.

"ENDA does not require an employer to provide benefits for the same-sex partner of an employee, nor does it allow the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to collect statistics on sexual orientation," the AFGE stated.

If ENDA passes, employers will need to review their procedures and policies to ensure they're in compliance, said The Employment Law Post, HR News.

"People don't always realize the impact in dollars and cents of GLBT businesses, individuals and allies in this community. ... it's (establishing a GLBTA chamber in the region) certainly a move in the right direction."

Charles Irwin, GLBTA Chamber of Commerce

Employers and businesses can engage with the community, sponsor events, and offer financial or volunteer resources.

"If they want to be known as inclusive, employers can be visibly supportive with leveraging of corporate support to help the community and support causes that LGBT people care about," Acker said.

If ENDA legislation is passed in its current form, it would "extend the federal employment discrimination protections (that are) currently based on race, sex, religion, national origin, age and disability to (include) sexual orientation. ENDA extends fair employment practices and does not convey special rights," according to The American Federation of Government Employees' Web site.

"It may even be a good idea for employers to go ahead and review their discrimination and harassment policies now, and either proactively amend them to be in compliance with ENDA, or at least know which provisions, if any, they will need to change if the bill passes."

With the likelihood of ENDA being signed into law, it would behoove employers to prepare for it beforehand, by addressing discrimination in the workplace.

The Pikes Peak region has a new resource for allies and the LGBT community — the GLBTA Chamber of Commerce.

"The chamber is growing rapidly, we have 78 businesses, services and organizations on our Web site — and we haven't even launched, yet," said Charles Irwin, director of the GLBTA Chamber.

Non-Discrimination Policies
Sexual Orientation

	Fortune 20	Fortune 100	Fortune 500	Fortune 1000	AmLaw 200
2009 Interim	12 (60%)	69 (69%)	207 (41%)	254 (25%)	112 (56%)
2008 Total	11 (55%)	60 (60%)	175 (35%)	214 (21%)	89 (45%)
2003 Total		11 (11%)	26 (5%)	—	—

Source: Human Rights Campaign

ENDA would "prohibit public and privates employers, employment agencies and labor unions from using an individual's sexual orientation as the basis for employment decisions. And it provides for the same process as permitted under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, but has limited remedies."

Uniformed military personnel, businesses with fewer than 15 employees

The timing is right for economic reasons — because of the recession, consumers are trying to spend locally.

"People don't always realize the impact in dollars and cents of GLBT businesses, individuals and allies in this community," he said. "There are always challenges for any minority group, but it's (establishing a GLBTA chamber in the region) certainly a move in the right direction." ▪ *CSBJ*

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p off the old Chase block

Mike

Y D

our office." (Which means you obviously didn't bother to read my previous columns, Chip.)

"Please give us a few minutes and complete the attached questionnaire, which asks about your experience with our department. (What, no offer of a free $100?)

"Since only a select number of customers were chosen to receive this questionnaire, your response is important to us." (Yeah, and your response was important to me, but you blew me off. And if you want someone to feel "select," take the time to actually sign the letter by hand, Chip.)

"Again, please accept our apologies for the inconvenience you experienced." (How about skipping the apologies and actually answering some questions?)

"We are continuously working to ensure the cardmember issues are resolved at the first point of contact." (Really? No more hanging up on customers? Not buying it.)

"A return envelope and postage have been provided." (Wow. Chase's generosity knows no bounds.)

No need to bore you with every question on the two-page survey, so here's a summary.

The first three deal with my satisfaction with the way my issue was handled and with how my question or problem was addressed. My choices of answers range from "very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied."

C'mon Chip, did you even take the time to review my complaint? I'll answer that for you: "No."

The next few questions deal with how many calls I had to make and how many days it took to resolve my question or problem.

Note to Chip: My problem was never resolved.

And then come my favorite questions:

- Overall, how satisfied are you with the reputation of your Chase credit card?
- Overall, how satisfied are you with the value of your Chase credit card?
- Would you recommend Chase as a good credit card provider to a friend or colleague?

Yeah, right.

Chip, if you really do care and want to discuss my "question or problem" (and actually provide me with an answer or two), give me a call. My number's below.

Anybody want to wager a free $100 checking account about whether my phone's going to ring?

Mike Boyd is editor of the Colorado Springs Business Journal. He can be reached at Mike.Boyd@csbj.com or 329-5206.

n Trend

nefit of the company anymore

struct beehive frames, ultimately donated to an enterprising women's cooperative in Mexicali, Mexico. The cooperative has embraced beekeeping as a way to generate income for its families.

- Go green racing showcases the importance of recycling, alternative energy and green transportation, while making a contribution to the local community.
- Operation military care (by far our favorite) is an engaging team-building activity that leads up to the final challenge — the assembly of care packages for our military heroes.

Whenever possible, the staff from the benefiting organization is there to receive the donations and convey their appreciation. Teambonding is a great way to give back to the community.

Our forecast is that visionaries like Goldstein will create more groundbreaking programs worldwide to support companies that want to give back to their communities and bond employees to their organizations.

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